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SOVIET COURSES OF ACTION WITH RESPECT TO GERMANY



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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

SOVIET COURSES OF ACTION WITH RESPECT TO GERMANY

NIE-4

The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Joint Staff participated in the preparation of this estimate and concur in it. For dissent by the Army, see footnotes to paragraphs 8 and 10, on page 3. This paper is based on information available on 29 January 1951.

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SOVIET COURSES OF ACTION WITH RESPECT TO GERMANY

THE PROBLEM

To estimate probable Soviet courses of action with respect to Germany.

CONCLUSIONS

Soviet Objectives in Germany

1. The Kremlin has the ultimate aim of bringing under its control the strategically important area and resources of Germany. The Kremlin regards any substantial part of Germany not under Soviet control, particularly if associated with the Western Powers, as a major obstacle to the realization of this ultimate aim and possibly as a threat to its own security. The Kremlin will not consider as satisfactory any solution of the German problem that does not promise to bring all of Germany within the Soviet orbit as a step in its aim for world domination. Currently the Kremlin is pursuing interim objectives designed to further the ultimate Soviet aim. Foremost is the aim to undermine the Federal German Republic, to forestall its rearmament, and to prevent its political, economic, and military association with the Western Powers.

2. Because of the strategic, economic, and political value of Eastern Germany to the Soviet orbit, the Kremlin will continue to strengthen Communist control within the German Democratic Republic, exploit its economic potential, develop its military potential and forces, and further integrate it into the Soviet orbit. The Kremlin will continue to use the German Democratic Republic to the utmost to bring pressure on the Federal German Republic and even on the Western Powers.

3. The Kremlin intends ultimately to gain complete control of West Germany. Unless or until the Kremlin is prepared to precipitate armed conflict, it will continue its efforts to intimidate the West German population, dis-

rupt the West German economy, draw West Germany's trade to the East, undermine and discredit the allied occupation and the Federal German Government, and develop Communist machinery for future subversion and violence.

4. The Kremlin plans ultimately to eliminate the Western Powers from Berlin and to establish that city as the undivided capital of the German Democratic Republic and eventually of a Satellite Germany. Meanwhile, the Kremlin will use Berlin as a pressure point.

Courses of Action—East Germany

5. The Kremlin will further strengthen and consolidate Communist control over the political and economic life of the German Democratic Republic. It will continue to integrate the economy of the German Democratic Republic into that of the Soviet orbit. In furtherance of its determination to strengthen its strategic position with respect to the West, it will continue in East Germany to improve existing military installations and to build new ones, and it will increase the numbers, armament, and capabilities of all branches of the Alert Police. The Alert Police may become an effective military force, and possibly German prisoners of war may be returned in organized units specially trained in the USSR to augment Alert Police strength.

Courses of Action—West Germany

6. In West Germany, possible courses of Soviet action run the gamut from political maneuver to the use of armed force. Initially,

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the Kremlin will continue to seek its ends by political maneuver, accompanied by increasing menaces and shows of military force. It will exploit four-power negotiations and negotiations between East and West Germans. It may even seek bilateral understanding with the Federal German Government if and when, through the lifting of controls by the Western Powers, the Federal German authorities should be in a position to enter into such an understanding. It will intensify its efforts to intimidate and demoralize the West Germans and the Western Europeans. It will try to distract, divide, and confuse the Western Powers. It will continue to use Communist parties and front organizations in Western Europe or elsewhere to foment revolutionary outbreaks and instigate or support additional military operations in Asia or Europe whenever and wherever the Western Powers appear least capable of taking effective counteraction.

7. The USSR will in the first instance direct its efforts toward frustrating West German rearmament, and probably estimates that its chances of succeeding by methods short of military action are favorable. The apprehensions and divisions already created among the Germans and among the Western Powers by the mere proposal to rearm West Germany would appear to give the Kremlin good grounds for such expectations. Nevertheless, we estimate that the Kremlin, in order to prevent West German rearmament, will not be willing to give up any of the elements of its present control over the German Democratic Republic or East Berlin which it considers essential, or any of its capabilities for gaining control of all Germany. We estimate further that the Kremlin would regard prevention of West German rearmament merely as a first though necessary step toward attainment of its ultimate objectives in Germany. We estimate finally that the failure of West German rearmament would not remove the danger that the USSR might resort to military action in order to secure its objectives or to forestall any unfavorable shift in its power position.

8. If, over a period of time, the USSR came to the decision that it could not prevent the accomplishment of West German rearmament, the establishment of a powerful Western coalition, and the close association of Western Germany therewith, it would regard the emergence of such a new European power situation as a barrier to its European ambitions and possibly as a threat to the security of the Soviet orbit. The Kremlin would then either adjust itself to the restoration of a power center in Western Europe or resort to military action to prevent it. The first alternative would oblige the USSR to forego for an indeterminate period its European ambitions and to lose the remarkably favorable opportunity created by the postwar power vacuum. The second alternative would involve acceptance by the USSR of the virtual certainty of global war.

The Kremlin has declared categorically that it could not reconcile itself to the rearmament of West Germany. Nevertheless it is impossible for us to determine at the present time which of the above alternatives the Kremlin would eventually choose. In making its decision as between these alternatives, the Kremlin will undoubtedly take into consideration the relative global power position of the USSR (including atomic capabilities) as well as the rearmament of Germany and Western Europe. We believe that if the Kremlin viewed the scale and nature of the rearmament of Western Germany in conjunction with the rearmament of the Western Powers as likely to constitute nothing more than a barrier to further expansion of the Soviet orbit in Europe, it might logically adjust itself for the time being to such a situation, while continuing to exploit its current advantages in other directions. We believe that if, on the other hand, Western German and Western European military, economic, and political power appeared to the Kremlin as likely to develop sufficient strength to constitute a threat to the security of the Soviet orbit, the Soviet Union would probably resort to military

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action, at the time and place most advantageous to it.★

9. If the Kremlin should decide to resort to military action, it would not be obliged to act immediately. Since West German and Western rearmament would necessarily take time before reaching dimensions considered dangerous by the Kremlin, the Kremlin might prefer to use this period for improving its position in atomic and other weapons, lessening its own vulnerability to air attack, generally strengthening its industrial potential, and continuing its attempts to undermine the progress being made by the Western Powers.

10. The USSR, however, might conclude that it would lose more than it would gain by wait-

ing, and might decide to resort immediately to some form of military action. It might, for example, still attempt to postpone global conflict by turning its Satellites against West Germany under cover of existing mutual assistance pacts directed against German "aggression" in the hope that the Western Powers could not take effective collective action against such a challenge. On the other hand, the USSR, in order to achieve maximum surprise and quick success, might resort to direct Soviet attack, accepting immediate global war. We have at the present time no basis for determining whether the USSR, in making a decision for military action, would strike immediately or prefer to wait.★★

★The Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Department of the Army, agrees that if a new European power situation emerged from the close association of a rearmed West Germany with a powerful Western coalition, the U.S.S.R. would be faced with the alternatives of adjustment or resort to military action to achieve Soviet-Communist objectives in Europe. G-2 agrees, further, that the first alternative would require the U.S.S.R. to forego its ambitions in Europe for an indeterminate period and that the second alternative would involve the virtual certainty of global war.

G-2 believes, however, that the Kremlin, once it recognized that such a situation was emerging, would be unlikely to decide that it constituted "nothing more than a barrier" to which it could adjust itself only "for the time being." The Soviets already view the Allied occupation forces in Western Germany, the Western orientation of the Bonn Government, and the existence of NATO as "barriers" to further expansion in Europe, but the Soviets' tactics have indicated their belief that these barriers possibly could be overcome without recourse to military action. The emergence of the power situation postulated above, however, would require the Soviets to conclude that it represented a complete block to Communist aims and constituted a threat to Soviet-orbit security which could not be overcome by non-military measures.

The political, economic, and military regeneration of Western Europe, which this prospect would imply, would require an adjustment by the Kremlin not "for the time being" but for an indefinite long-term period, thus losing for the foreseeable future the remarkably favorable opportunity presented by the current weakness of Western Europe. The development of increasing Western power in Europe could then only be checked by dynamic action—not by adjustment. Such an adjustment would be inconsistent with the presently confident, uncompromising temper of the Kremlin, which is effectively supported by Soviet armed forces in an advanced state of readiness for war. The maintenance and improvement of this state of readiness for war by the Soviet armed forces, and the steady reorganization, improvement in combat effectiveness and expansion, even beyond treaty limitations, by the Satellites, indicate an aggressive and dynamic policy rather than one of peaceful adjustment to increased Western power. This aggressive policy is also indicated by the current Soviet insistence on solution of controversial problems strictly along lines which further their major objectives, accepting risks which might precipitate global hostilities. Such an adjustment would also be inconsistent with our belief that the Kremlin considers the attainment of control over all of Germany as a decisive step toward domination of all Europe, a gain which could not be adequately balanced for an indefinite period by exploitation of advantages in other directions.

From the considerations stated above, G-2 believes it more likely that the Soviets would decide on resort to military action rather than make the required adjustment. G-2 recognizes that the U.S.S.R. would consider its global power position, including atomic capabilities, in making its decision.

★★The Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Department of the Army, does not believe that the U.S.S.R. would realistically consider that it had a reasonable chance of postponing global conflict by turning its Satellites against Western Germany. G-2 believes that even under present conditions the Soviets would consider that such an action would quickly develop into a general war.

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Courses of Action—Berlin

11. The Kremlin views the allied position in Berlin as a major obstacle to the attainment of long-term Soviet objectives in West Germany and Western Europe, and as a continuing impediment to the Communist program in East Germany. The Kremlin has, however, indicated for some time that it considers the problem of Berlin subordinate to that of Germany as a whole. Whatever further courses of action the USSR may resort to will depend on its estimate of the extent to which such courses of action would contribute to or interfere with realization of its over-all policy. In addition to continued and intensified harassment of the Western sectors of the city, it may pursue the following courses of action, listed in order of probability: (A) Partial or complete denial to the Western Powers of access to Berlin; (B) Direct attack on West Berlin by German Democratic Republic forces; (C) Direct attack on West Berlin by Soviet forces.

(A) *Partial or complete denial to the Western Powers of Access to Berlin.* Both the USSR and the German Democratic Republic have the capability to interdict allied land communications with Berlin. Such Soviet action would be designed to:

1. Affect the morale of West Berlin;
2. Strain the economy of the Western sectors;
3. Force the Western Powers to engage in dangerous and expensive relief operations;
4. Cause a redeployment of transport aircraft of the Western Powers;
5. Provide the Kremlin with a counter for political bargaining, not only on Berlin, but on broader issues; and
6. Possibly serve as a prelude to Communist insurrection in West Berlin.

The USSR may reinstitute limited restrictions like those of 1948-49, if only

for the purpose of exerting pressure. More likely, however, the Kremlin will estimate that even more drastic measures would not involve serious risk of general war. The USSR will therefore supplement its earlier restrictions. It will adopt measures such as jamming communications and other covert devices for obstructing an air lift. If the Western Powers maintain air access to Berlin despite these obstructions, the USSR may engage in antiaircraft "firing practice" in the corridors and later may openly attack Western aircraft with fighters. Such a Soviet fighter attack would be undertaken, however, only if the Kremlin were willing to accept a general war.

(B) *Direct Attack on West Berlin by German Democratic Republic Forces.* In the near future, if not at present, the German Democratic Republic forces will probably have the strength to overwhelm the garrisons of the Western Powers in West Berlin. The Kremlin must be aware that such an attack by German Democratic Republic troops on West Berlin would provoke counteraction by the Western Powers which would be almost certain to lead to general war. This course of action therefore appears unlikely unless the Kremlin had decided to accept general war with the Western Powers. It is possible that the USSR in an attempt to occupy all of Berlin and yet avoid general war might first withdraw its own occupation forces and then use the military forces of the German Democratic Republic, possibly in conjunction with Satellite forces, to achieve that objective.

(C) *Direct Attack on West Berlin by Soviet Forces.* Such a Soviet course of action would demonstrate Soviet willingness to accept general war with the Western Powers.

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